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Commentary: Rick Warren foes aren't practicing tolerance

- Story Highlights
- Jordan Lorence: Barack Obama has asked Rick Warren to give the invocation
- He says activists are seeking to ban Warren from speaking because of his views
- Lorence says Warren's view on marriage is the majority position in the U.S.
- He says Obama also believes marriage is between a man and a woman

By Jordan Lorence
Special to CNN

Editor's note: Jordan Lorence is senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund, a nonprofit organization of Christian attorneys. He has litigated religious liberty and free speech cases since 1984, including the Southworth case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1999, involving mandatory student fees at public universities, and a 2004 case that resulted in a California Supreme Court ruling that marriage licenses issued by San Francisco to same-sex couples were invalid.

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona (CNN) -- Proponents of redefining marriage couldn't wait for the new president to be sworn in before demanding that he erase from the inauguration ceremony a prominent American who disagrees with them.

The target of their rhetorical bombardment is Rick Warren, the popular Christian pastor from Southern California.

President-elect Barack Obama has asked Warren to give the invocation at his inauguration. Not so fast, cries Kathryn Kolbert, head of People for the American Way, an organization that claims to advance equality and freedom of speech and religion (but not for Rick Warren and those who agree with his marriage views) in a piece published on CNN.com.

Warren's grave sin? Along with 52 percent of California voters, he supported California's Proposition 8, which affirmed the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. What a radical!

Though Warren will only be praying for the country's future (not giving a speech about marriage), Kolbert and others are pressuring Obama to set a precedent for his administration of publicly shunning someone who supports the traditional definition of marriage.

They want people like Warren silenced and ostracized for their "hate speech," defined today as disagreeing with their agenda to impose a redefinition of marriage on an unwilling America. Obama, to his credit, has resisted their strident demands.

The attacks on Warren are the latest in a series of coercive, intimidating attacks on supporters of traditional marriage.

Now, activists have ramped up their strong-arm tactics by pushing the president-elect to ban Warren from appearing at the inauguration.

This is amazingly audacious, in light of the fact that on marriage, the overwhelming majority of Americans and, indeed, humanity, agrees with Warren. Americans have voted to preserve marriage in all 30 states where it has been on the ballot by an average vote of more than 65 percent.

The collective experience and wisdom of every major civilization from the dawn of time agrees that societies function best and children are best protected when marriage is defined as between one man and one woman. Warren and those who agree with him want all nations to experience these benefits of marriage when it is rightly defined and consistently practiced.

Ironically, Obama has repeatedly stated that he agrees "that marriage is the union between a man and a woman." Does Kolbert question his

fitness to serve as president in light of his allegedly "bigoted" views on marriage?

Kolbert brazenly denies that she and other activists desire to silence pastors like Warren because of their marriage views. She is indignant that Warren and others spread the "big lie" that redefining marriage would threaten the freedom of speech and religious liberties of those who hold the view shared by the vast majority of Americans.

Her argument is disarming in its pure duplicity. Part of Kolbert's case against Warren, who she thinks should not be speaking at such an important public ceremony, is that he believes that folks like her are working to ban people like him from speaking at public ceremonies. Thus, the "big lie" becomes an obvious truth.

This is really all about ideological purity -- and purging. Are the activists proposing that no one should be permitted to speak at the inauguration if they hold beliefs on marriage contrary to hers and her ideological bedfellows? How can publicly snubbing the influential and respected Warren advance what Kolbert calls "the values of unity and respect ... on which President-elect Obama campaigned?"

It won't. But it will surely send a message to those who believe in marriage, that they will be viciously attacked for expressing, or merely believing, that marriage is defined as between one man and one woman. Ms. Kolbert provides just the latest example of how the forces of "tolerance" and "diversity" quickly abandon their principles of "live and let live" when somebody disagrees with them.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Jordan Lorence.

All About[Rick Warren](#) • [Barack Obama](#) • [Marriage](#)

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◆ 2008 Cable News Network

Internet Search Results for Rick Warren

Saddleback video

Saddleback Church

<http://www.saddlebackfamily.com/blogs/newsandviews/index.html>

December 22, 2008

"News and Views"

**(What he really believes about gay marriage – says he never said homosexuality was the same thing about incest and pediphilia)
first video**

October 23, 2008

**"news and views" on prop 8
fourth video**

Youtube.com links

Rachel Maddow & Katha Pollitt take Rick Warren to the woodshed

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rwk845iMXY&eurl=http://salon.glenrose.net/default.asp?view=plink&id=9463>

Beliefnet Rick Warren Interview: On Gay Marriage and Divorce

**<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nXq0wO5-n0&feature=related>
(infamous comments about incest, pediphilia...)**

Fox News: Hannity & Colmes - Rick Warren: Controversy Continues Over Prop. 8 in California

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0q7a4yzynYk>

Rick Warren has an openly gay congregant! Fox News

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnxg59Vb6KY&NR=1>

(at 3:50 he talks about gay marriage)

ABC: Nightline - Kay Warren on AIDS

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIZj54ID5LQ&feature=related>

(basically an interview of Kay, but an interesting short slip on Rick.)

Rick Warren on gays, their immaturity and desire for multiple partners

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0spPzgma6Q&feature=related>

Charlie Rose - Rick Warren / Gregory Boyd August 24, 2007

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GTeilBjo3k&NR=1>

(at 30:40 he talks about his work with the ACT-UP leader)

Rick Warren's Gay PR Stunt?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFXULFTtEto&feature=related>

Blogs, Articles, etc.**Beliefnet article**

<http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Politics/2008/08/Rick-Warren-On-His-Saddleback-Summit-With-Mccain-And-Obama.aspx?p=1>

Talk To Action

<http://www.talk2action.org/story/2008/3/30/54825/1882>

March 30, 2008

"Ugandan Media: Rick Warren Denounces Gay Rights" by Richard Bartholomew

The Kampala Monitor reports: "Dr [Rick] Warren said that homosexuality is not a natural way of life and thus not a human right. "We shall not tolerate this aspect at all," Dr Warren said.

Warren was speaking in support of Ugandan Anglicans who intend to boycott the forthcoming Lambeth Conference, and this harsh rejection of

**tolerance for
gays and lesbians may have serious consequences in a country where
homosexuals face harrassment and and the threat of imprisonment...**

The Nation

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20081229/posner>

“What's the Matter With Rick Warren?” by Sarah Posner

The Los Angeles Times

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/opinion/la-oe-pollitt22-2008dec22,0,6597471.story>

December 22, 2008

“Rick Warren is an insulting choice” By Katha Pollitt

Slate

FIGHTING WORDS

Shame on You, Rick Warren

Still more reasons to boot the huckster of Saddleback from the inauguration.

By Christopher Hitchens

Posted Monday, Dec. 29, 2008, at 2:43 PM ET

It seems to have been agreed by every single media outlet that only one group has the right to challenge Obama's promotion of "Pastor" Rick Warren, and that group is the constituency of politically organized homosexuals. But why should that be? Last week, I pointed out that [Warren maintains that heaven is closed to Jews and that his main theological mentor was a crackpot "end-of-days" ranter](#). Why is this not to count against him as well? Do we need our presidential invocation to be given by a bigmouth clerical businessman who is, furthermore, a religious sectarian? Let me add a little more to the mix. In November 2006, Warren made a trip to Syria and was granted an audience with the human toothbrush who has inherited control of that country and all its citizens. [Bashar Assad](#), the dictator of Syria, is also a religious sectarian—his power base is confined to the [Alawite](#) sect—and in the intervals of murdering his critics in Lebanon, he does not expect to receive very many distinguished American or European guests. Of late, the most eminent I can think of have been David Duke, former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, and [George Galloway](#) of Britain's so-called [Respect Party](#), and I believe only Galloway—an old fan of Baathism in all its forms—got an audience with the Grand Toothbrush himself.

Whatever time Warren managed to get with the dear bristled leader was not wasted—you should check out the hilarious parody of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza that accidentally results from the [official photograph](#)—and whatever hospitality he received from the Syrian authorities did not go unreturned. "Syria," he told his viewers back home by video, is "a moderate country, and the official government rule and position is to not allow extremism of any kind." This is a highly original way to describe a regime that is joined at the hip with the Iranian theocracy, that is the patron of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and that is the official and unabashed host of the fugitive Hamas leadership whose military wing directs massacre operations from Damascus itself. (One might also add that the Syrian Baath Party's veteran defense minister,* Mustafa Tlas, published a book under his own name that accused Jews of using the blood of non-Jewish children for the making of those ever-menacing Passover matzos. I suppose it depends how you define *extremism*.)

According to an undenied report from the Syrian state news agency, SANA, Warren followed his Assad meeting with another get-together, this time with a mufti. The resulting press communiqué read like this:

The Mufti called for conveying the real image of Syria, national unity and its

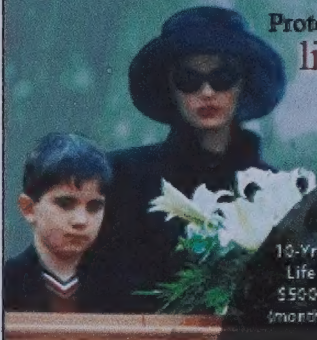
AccuQuote
Saving You Money For Life

If you died today,
what would happen to your family's future?

Protect them today with
life insurance.

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	age	male
10-Yr Level Term Life Insurance	35	\$ 16.19
\$500,000 Policy (monthly premiums)	40	\$ 21.88
	45	\$ 34.56
	50	\$ 56.00



call to spread peace, amity and justice to the American people which the US has distorted their image throughout the world. Pastor Warren expressed admiration of Syria and the coexistence he saw between Muslims and Christians, stressing that he will convey this image to his church and country.

(As one who has spent time in Syria, I can confirm that the official translations are indeed of that abysmal level. But Warren cannot wriggle out in this fashion, because most of the worst of what he said was recorded and transmitted in his own voice.) Our good pastor also found the time to tell his captive audience—if I may use such an unoriginal phrase in a literal way—that 80 percent of his countrymen opposed the administration's policy in Iraq. Assume yourself, dear reader, to be one of that possible 80 percent. Did you ever ask to be spoken for by Warren, who was a guest of a regime that sponsors al-Qaida infiltrators in Iraq, or to see him denounce the administration in front of an audience of Syrians that had no choice but to listen to whatever it was told? For shame.

And a shame, too, that on Inauguration Day we may also have to stand still—out of respect rather than fear, it is true—and listen to a man who is either a half-witted dupe, a hopeless naif, a cynical tourist who does favors for the powerful, a religious nut bag, a cowardly liar, or perhaps some unappetizing combination of all five. I personally think that the all-five answer is the correct one, because you cannot just *find* yourself in Syria, smirking into the face of the local despot and being treated like a treasured guest. The thing has to be arranged, and these things take time. So what was the motive? Listen again to Warren's driveling broadcast for the folks back home at the megachurch:

In fact, you know Saul of Tarsus—Saul was a Syrian. St. Paul, on the road to Damascus, had his conversion experience, and so Christians have been here the longest, and they get along with the Muslims, and the Muslims get along with them. There's a lot less tension than in other places.

I can absolutely see what Warren hoped to get out of this sordid little trip, the evidence of which he vainly tried to conceal when it threatened to become embarrassing. He wanted to be on video for his open-mouthed followers as he posed "on the road to Damascus." And he didn't care what deals he had to make, with Baath and Toothbrush Central Command, in order to bring off such a fundraising coup. But now it's the sandals of Obama that are being exploited by the same tub-thumper, and one has not merely a right but a duty to object to having as an inaugural auxiliary a man who is a pushover for anti-Semitism, Islamic sectarianism, "rapture" theology, fascist dictatorship, 10th-rate media trade-offs, and last-minute panicky self-censorship *all at the same time*. Is there nobody in the Obama camp who can see that this is not just a gay issue? And is there no gay figure who can say that Warren is objectionable for reasons that have more to do with decency, democracy, and the Constitution? The televised, Bible-bashing entrepreneur is perhaps the single most unattractive and embarrassing phenomenon that modern American culture has ever produced. It would be nice if we could begin a new era in the absence of this racket and these racketeers, and if enough people can find their voices, we still may be able to do so.

Correction, Dec. 29, 2008: *This article originally identified Mustafa Tlas as the Syrian Baath Party's veteran foreign minister. In fact, he was the defense minister. (Return to the corrected sentence.)*

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and the Roger S. Mertz media fellow at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, Calif.

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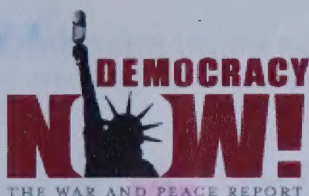
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Correction, Dec. 19, 2008: This article originally identified Mustafa Tlas as the Syrian Social Party's veteran foreign minister. In fact, he was the defense minister. (Return to the corrected sentence.)

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and the Roger A. Packer media fellow at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, Calif.

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[Display full version](#)**December 23, 2008****Max Blumenthal on "Rick Warren's Double Life"**

President-elect Barack Obama is drawing criticism from many supporters for his choice to deliver the invocation at next month's inauguration. Obama has selected the Reverend Rick Warren, a leading evangelical opponent of abortion and same-sex marriage. Warren supported California's recent gay marriage ban and has compared abortion to the Nazi Holocaust. In a recent interview with the website BeliefNet.com, Warren said he thinks gay marriage is comparable to incest, polygamy and child abuse. We speak to investigative journalist Max Blumenthal. [includes rush transcript]



Guest:

Max Blumenthal, A Puffin Foundation writing fellow at the Nation Institute, his work has appeared in *The Nation*, Salon and many other publications. He is currently writing a book on the US evangelical movement. His latest article, "Rick Warren's Hypocritical Double Life" is online at the DailyBeast.com

RUSH TRANSCRIPT

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AMY GOODMAN: President-elect Barack Obama is drawing criticism from many supporters for his choice to deliver the invocation at next month's inauguration. Obama selected the Reverend Rick Warren, a leading evangelical opponent of abortion and same-sex marriage. Warren supported California's recent gay marriage ban and has compared abortion to the Nazi Holocaust. In a recent interview with the website beliefnet.com, Warren said he thinks gay marriage is comparable to incest, polygamy and child abuse.

REV. RICK WARREN: I'm opposed to having a brother and sister be together and call that marriage. I'm opposed to an older guy marrying a child and calling that a marriage. I'm opposed to one guy having multiple wives and calling that marriage.

STEVEN WALDMAN: Do you think those are equivalent to gays getting married?

REV. RICK WARREN: Oh, I do. I just say, for 5,000 years, marriage has been defined by every single culture and every single religion. This is not a Christian issue. Buddhists, Muslims, Jews—you know, historically, marriage is a man and a woman.

AMY GOODMAN: The Reverend Rick Warren, speaking to beliefnet.com. After Warren's inauguration appearance was announced, Obama was forced to defend his choice.

PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK OBAMA: It is no secret that I am a fierce advocate for equality for gay and lesbian Americans. It is something that I have been consistent on and something that I intend to continue to be consistent on during my presidency.

What I've also said is that it is important for America to come together, even though we may have disagreements on certain social issues. And I would note that a couple of years ago, I was invited to Rick Warren's church to speak, despite his awareness that I held views that were entirely contrary to his when it came to gay and lesbian rights, when it came to issues like abortion. Nevertheless, I had an opportunity to speak. And that dialogue, I think, is part of what my campaign's been all about.

AMY GOODMAN: President-elect Barack Obama, speaking in Chicago last week.

I'm joined now by Max Blumenthal, Puffin Foundation writing fellow at the Nation Institute. His work has appeared in *The Nation*, Salon and many other publications, currently writing a book on the US evangelical movement. His latest article, "Rick Warren's Hypocritical Double Life," is online at dailybeast.com. Max Blumenthal joins us by *DN!* video stream.

Welcome to *Democracy Now!*, Max.

MAX BLUMENTHAL: Great to be here.

AMY GOODMAN: Talk about the history of Rick Warren.

MAX BLUMENTHAL: Well, the history of Rick Warren is pretty interesting. And you heard some of his views right there. These are views that people have only recently started paying attention to. Prior to this controversy, Rick Warren was, you know, proffered by the media as the voice of the new evangelical movement, which embraces environmentalism and fights poverty and is going to move beyond the old hobgoblins of the Christian right and the old, you know, draconian figures of the Christian right, like James Dobson and Pat Robertson. Rick Warren was supposed to be the pioneer of this new movement. He is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church, a megachurch in Orange County. And he's the author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, which is, you know, a sort of subtly Christian, self-help manual that sold 25 million copies. So he has a really broad appeal, and he's planted churches across the world, especially in Africa.

And because, you know, the media has expected evangelicals, especially conservative evangelicals, to be draconian and retrograde, you know, they've made a hero out of Rick Warren without looking at who he really is and what he really believes. Nicholas Kristof from the *New York Times*, for example, has called Rick Warren an evangelical liberals can love. You know, *Newsweek* named Rick Warren one of the fifteen people who make America great. And even *The Nation*, which I've written for, you know, the venerable left-wing magazine, in 2005 published a piece calling Rick Warren America's pastor.

You know, he wears a Hawaiian shirt. He looks like a big teddy bear. He doesn't

holler or hector. He speaks in a ponderous tone. And he does seem to genuinely care about the environment and care about poverty. It's not clear what he's actually done.

And he's been pumped up by a small group of Democratic consultants, who urged Barack Obama first to go to his church and speak with him and then to participate in a debate this August that was broadcast by CNN, the Saddleback Forum, where Rick Warren essentially got to interview both candidates sequentially, John McCain and Barack Obama, on the issues and serve as the national minister. The debate went really badly for Obama, because Rick Warren asked him a trick question about abortion: When does a baby get human rights? Barack Obama couldn't answer it. Soon after, he was attacked by right-wing radio hosts for his answer, because he said, you know, "This question is above my pay grade." And Rick Warren even went on a conservative radio show and, you know, chuckled about Obama's response and kind of lightly mocked him.

So, the real Rick Warren is someone who fights the culture war with a velvet glove. He's a religious right figure who's figured out a new strategy to move into a Democratic post-Bush era and still hold influence. He even—he freely admitted to a reporter from the *Wall Street Journal* that the principal difference, the only difference, between him and James Dobson is a matter of tone. And when I called Rick Warren's PR handlers, you know, the people that are responsible for making him into this major national figure, from Larry A. Ross Communications, they kind of laughed at the idea that he was America's pastor. They said he's consistent with what the Bible teaches. He's not trying to be America's pastor or whatever.

So, Rick Warren openly backed Proposition 8 in California last November—this November, and he did so in the terms that you heard him speaking to Steven Waldman, essentially saying that two percent of our population, the homosexual population, was trying to dictate to the rest of us, which is a really demagogic thing to say. He told that to his congregation. And he's backed every anti-gay proposition that's come down the pike in California in the last ten years, including Proposition 22, which laid the groundwork for Proposition 8. He joined up with James Dobson and Charles Colson and Tony Perkins and these people to do this.

Beyond that, he compares pro-choice advocates to Holocaust deniers. He recently was interviewed by Sean Hannity, and Sean Hannity asked him, "Should we attack Iran?" And Rick Warren said, "Well, it's our God-given obligation to take out evildoers." He has recently scrubbed material from his website claiming that man walked the earth with dinosaurs, basically that, you know, history is one big *Flintstones* episode. He will not allow homosexuals to be members of his church, and he recently scrubbed that from his website.

So it's just interesting to me that people are finally paying attention to this, after Rick Warren has never tried to hide his views. He's never really gamed the media. It's just that progressives have finally drawn the line, where Barack Obama has not.

AMY GOODMAN: You write about, one, Rick Warren saying he doesn't feel that politics and religion should be mixed. But you also talk about how in the last days of the presidential race of Bush's 2004 re-election bid, Warren sent an urgent blast email to hundreds of thousands of evangelicals, insisting they base their votes on five non-negotiable issues: abortion, stem cell research, gay marriage, human cloning and euthanasia.

MAX BLUMENTHAL: Right. And this is before Rick Warren became a member of the ONE Campaign, before, you know, the media had began puffing him, and before people—Democratic consultants like Mara Vanderslice, who ran a sort of Christian

front group for Obama called Matthew 25, and self-proclaimed progressive evangelicals in the media, like Amy Sullivan, began presenting him as one of the new evangelicals who was going to take us beyond the Christian right. But the evidence was there that Rick Warren had sort of insidiously backed George W. Bush by saying that pastors had to vote and urge their congregations to vote on issues like abortion and homosexuality. If you vote on those issues and you say that those issues are non-negotiable, then of course you're going to vote for George W. Bush, and of course you're going to back the Republicans for Congress.

Beyond that, you know, Rick Warren says he's for the environment. Rick Warren says that he's for fighting poverty, which is great. But what has he actually done? You know, I've spent hours scouring the internet, calling around, trying to find some results that Rick Warren has produced in Africa against AIDS, results he's produced against poverty. And all I can find is that his peace programs, which he calls them, are sort of recruitment vehicles for the churches that he's planning in Africa and that he is using these programs actually to evangelize, and there's no real way of measuring his results. And there are Christian groups that are doing good work, you know, in the third world, that are fighting poverty, and they measure results, groups like Medical Teams International. Even World Vision measures results. But we have no way of knowing what Rick Warren is doing. It looks to me like he's going around to the Aspen Institute and to these big elite festivals and telling people who expect evangelicals to be retrograde and who expect evangelicals to be draconian, that he's doing something different. And he speaks the language that people want to hear in the media-manufactured age of post-partisanship. But it's unclear what he's actually doing, beyond fighting the culture war with a velvet glove.

AMY GOODMAN: Max Blumenthal, let's turn to another clip highlighting some of Rick Warren's views. Earlier this month, he was interviewed by Ann Curry of MSNBC.

ANN CURRY: If science finds that this is biological—

REV. RICK WARREN: Yeah?

ANN CURRY: —that people are born to be gay, would you change your position?

REV. RICK WARREN: No. And the reason why is because we all have biological predispositions. I'm naturally inclined to have sex with every beautiful woman I see. But that doesn't mean it's the right thing to do.

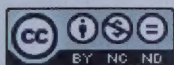
AMY GOODMAN: That's Rick Warren. Max Blumenthal, final thoughts?

MAX BLUMENTHAL: Well, that's a bizarre remark I haven't heard. And, you know, I like to get to know women first, and I think, you know, most people do. Rick Warren has a doctrine of women's submission, which he preaches to his church, and he tells the female members of his church that they have to support their husbands' decisions, even if they make bad financial decisions, because women have to submit in a biblical manner to their husbands. So this goes way beyond being anti-gay. He's, you know, patriarchal. He's supported assassinating Iran's president. And he's just—

You know, I have no problem, and I don't think anyone should have any problem with Barack Obama going to Rick Warren's church and meeting with him or working with him on good initiatives. But the question is, where does Barack Obama draw the line when someone demonizes a segment of Americans? Is this person really fit

to address the nation and confer God's blessing on the entire United States of America, when Rick Warren freely admits that he only believes that a small segment of Americans are going to heaven and that the rest of us are going to burn in an everlasting lake of fire? That's the question. And I think that Barack Obama has answered it. But at the very least, progressives have drawn the line here, and I think they should hold the line.

AMY GOODMAN: Max Blumenthal, I want to thank you for being with us, Puffin Foundation writing fellow at the Nation Institute, writing a book on the evangelical movement. His latest article is called "Rick Warren's Hypocritical Double Life." It's online at dailybeast.com.



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